



# Consumer Alert

## THE FORMAL UTILITY COMPLAINT

### How to be Heard

**A**s a customer of a natural gas or electric utility company, you object to an action of a regulated utility company. You have worked with the company to resolve the problem. However, you continue to disagree with the company's decision. You contact the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) staff for help, and you remain dissatisfied even after the staff has completed its review of the situation. What can you do now?

### File a Formal Utility Complaint & Request a Hearing

To request a formal hearing, prepare a letter or complaint explaining the problem. Send the original and seven copies of the letter/complaint to the Commission at the following address:

MPSC  
P.O. Box 30221  
Lansing, MI 48909

The written complaint must contain the following information:

- your name, address, telephone number, and signature;
- the name and address of the utility company with whom there is a disagreement;
- the location/address of the disputed action;
- the time and dates of the disputed actions;
- a description of exactly what happened – include all details, the names and addresses of any persons involved, disputed charges and costs;
- a statement of what you want done about the matter.

### Requesting a Hearing



### Next Action

When the MPSC receives written summary of the problem, its legal staff will review it to determine that required standards have been met. If it meets the standards, the MPSC sends a copy of it to the utility company and asks for an answer, and sets a date for hearing. You and the utility company will receive notice by mail of the time and place of the hearing.

### Hearing Process

Formal utility complaint hearings are heard in trial-like proceedings. This means that you, the utility company, and MPSC staff will come before an administrative law judge.

You must prove your case. A formal complaint proceeding is separate from any informal proceeding that may have taken place on the problem. Lawyers always represent the utility company. You may hire a lawyer, represent yourself (excluding some businesses), or bring anyone you want to help you. The MPSC cannot provide you a lawyer or pay any legal fees.

MPSC staff may also become involved in the formal hearing by taking a staff position on the issues.

After the hearing has ended, the judge will recommend a decision to the Commission. The Commission will review the hearing record and issue its decision. Also, the Commission will review any proposed settlement of issues filed before an order is issued. Appeals of Commission decisions must be made in the appropriate court within 30 days after the decision.

## Common Problem & Results

The most common residential customer problem reported to the MPSC involves a bill from the utility company that seems too high. This problem sometimes means that the utility company may have estimated the bills. Other common problems are about service, installation of utility equipment, and the rules that govern the utility company.

The MPSC may allow certain kinds of relief. For example, it can order that your account be credited, equipment fixed, or the removal of certain charges. The MPSC does not have the authority to award you money for injury or for damage to your property. For example, if a storm causes a break in service, the MPSC cannot order a utility company to repay you for spoiled food. A court of law must address this type of claim.

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Michigan Public Service Commission  
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